Mr. *BURRELL's*

SERMON

AT THE

Assizes at *East-Grinsted.*

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

ASSIZES

AT

East-Grinsted in *SUSSEX*,

MARCH 18, 1711.

By *WILLIAM BURRELL*, M. A.
Rector of *Brightling* in the said County.

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(1)

BIBLIOTHECA

To the RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

Henry Collins, *Esq*;

High-Sheriff of the County of *Sussex*;

And to the

Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury.

GENTLEMEN,

IN compliance with your Requeſt, this Diſcourſe ventures to appear in publick. The favourable Countenance you were pleas'd to give to theſe honeſt, tho' imperfect Endeavours of mine, will amply teſtifie your juſt Abhorrence of thoſe ſcandalous Liberties which reflect a high

Diſhonour upon that Government you both love and reverence. The reviling a *Publick Miniſtry*, is an Evil the rather to be guarded againſt, becauſe it uſually offers it ſelf under the plauſible Colours of a reaſonable Complaint and Legal Remonſtrance.

By this means the Poiſon goes down without Scruple or Reluctance, and inſenſibly weakens and lays waſte all the Engagements of Duty and Allegiance; whilſt Perſons are taught, that to proſecute an Oppreſſor with a virulent and implacable Hatred, is but to expreſs a laudable Reſentment, and that to Overthrow is neceſſary to Reform. And the worſt

worſt of it is, that there is a latent Miſchief at the bottom: *When the Servants are thus ſpitefully entreated, we will not have this Man reign over us*, is the plain *Engliſh* with theſe diſcontented *Citizens*: —That our Excellent Conſtitution may be ſecur'd from ſuch a *Generation of Vipers, who have whet their Tongues like a Sword*; that it may never want ſuch Faſt and Faithful Friends, as the Worthy Perſons under whoſe Authority this *Diſcourſe* ſets forth into the World; That you (Mr. *High Sheriff*) in particular, would accept this publick Acknowledgment of the many Obligations I lie under to your Family, are the Hopes and ſincere Deſires of him

him who is with all Respect,

Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

WILL. BURRELL.

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2 Pet.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

ASSIZES

AT

East-Grinsted in *SUSSEX.*

2 Pet. 2. 10. *Latter Part.*

—They are not afraid to speak evil of Dignities.

IT is not, I conceive, very material to enquire what Persons are here Characteriz'd in the Text. The Sense of Expositors has been different in this Particular. However, from a large Account of the most abominable Vices asserted to them by the Apostle in this Chapter, we may justly conclude, that they were Men of very

profligate and ſcandalous Principles, ſuch as had made a ſhift to free themſelves from all the uneaſie Reſtraints of Duty and Religion, and ſo in Conſequence became abandon'd to the moſt deteſtable Licentiouſneſs. They are ſaid after a ſevere Charge of the fouleſt Enormities, towards the Beginning of this Verſe, to be ſuch as *deſpiſe Government, Preſumptuous are they, ſelf-willed*; and then, which is a very bad Ingredient in a Sinner's Character, *They are not afraid to ſpeak evil of Dignities.*

But then who are intended by the Apoſtle under the Title of *Dignities*, it may be neceſſary to examine; and here, to the Opinion of thoſe who are willing to underſtand the Angelical Orders whom theſe Hereticks are ſuppos'd to have reviled and blaſphemed, we ought, I preſume, to prefer the Senſe and Authority of * *Grotius* as moſt natural and obvious, *viz.* that by *Dignities* are meant the Higher Powers of this World, either ſuch as are inveſted with the Supreme Authority, and act as God's immediate Repreſentatives, or, as we may yet farther fairly argue, thoſe who under that Authority, are commiſſioned in the Publick Adminiſtration.

* In loc.

To both of theſe Nature and Religion in all lawful things, demand a ready and chearful Obedience; and conſequently by reviling either, we tranſgreſs the Bounds both of Duty and Decency; we are deſervedly ſubject to the Cenſure of the Apoſtle, and fall under the Character, as we ſhall alſo under the Puniſhment, of thoſe ungodly Men, who *are not afraid to ſpeak evil of Dignities.*

The

The Senſe of the Words being thus clear'd, ſo far as may ſerve to their preſent Application, I ſhall (with your favourable Attention) make it the Argument of the enſuing Diſcourſe, to conſider and examine that common Practice of Defaming our Superiours; ſuch I more eſpecially intend, as under the Sovereign Power, and by an unconteſtable Authority thence derived, are delegated to manage and direct the weightier Affairs of Government, and who therefore move at too remote, and withal too ſacred a Diſtance, for us to treat with Familiarity, much more with Reproach.

If the Subject may perhaps be ungrateful to ſuch as are concerned in the Charge; I have this to offer in Defence, that the Duty I am preſſing, will be found to have a Place amongſt thoſe ſolemn Truths we are commanded to Teach and Enjoin; that therefore a *Neceſſity is laid upon us, yea, Wo will be unto us if we preach not the Goſpel.*

For the more regular Diſcharge of the Argument before us, I ſhall in the

Firſt place, briefly repreſent the dangerous Conſequences of Evil-ſpeaking in general, and with regard to private Perſons, ſo far however, as may lead us on in a direct and proper Proſecution of what is intended the Matter of our

Second Particular, the unwarrantable Practice of *Evil-ſpeaking of Dignities*, in the Senſe we at preſent conceive theſe Words of the Apoſtle; ſince whatſoever upon Examination appears Criminal in the one Caſe, will with much ſtronger Reaſon conclude againſt thoſe indecent, unjuſtifiable Liberties in the other.

First then, I am to represent the dangerous Issues of *Evil-speaking* in general: And the Calamities in which private Persons are hence involv'd, will appear, if we consider that one fatal and too well attested Consequence of this Sin, is, that Men are naturally led from the Representations of others, to fix their Opinions of Persons of whom they are made. There is nothing we are so apt to take upon Trust, as the Character of other People, which we can sometimes, without farther Enquiry, dispense with, when 'tis urged in their Favour. But as the Scale usually turns to the worst side, so it is here also: We are ever disposed with Satisfaction and Silence to listen to the ill Fame of a Man; are glad to hear any one sunk in the good Opinion of the World; and there is this never-failing Consequence attending, that none is wanting to illustrate upon the ill Report of others; which, as it betrays a base and disingenuous Mind, so is it a convincing Testimony that we could with Pleasure be the first Authors of what we are so sollicitous to improve. Hence therefore appears the Danger of speaking to a Man's Disadvantage, and representing him in Terms of Shame and Reproach: For by this means he is unjustly deprived of his Reputation amongst the Credulous Undiscerning *Vulgar*, who have neither Leisure, Ability, nor Inclination, strictly to examine the Reasons of things, and can with the most ready Compliance give in to a Man's Discredit, being ever disposed easily to receive what above all things they are willing should be true.

Those

Those whose Business 'tis to rise in the Estimation and Favour of the People, by laying others as low as possible, have to Advantage experienced the fatal Arts of Calumny and Detraction; so that when they have attempted to step up upon the Ruins of their Neighbour's Fortune, those deadly Engines, those Arrows, even bitter Words (in the Stile of the Royal *Psalmist*) have been the first Ministers of Execution, and having smoothed the Way with the giddy *Vulgar* by a handsome Harangue to a Man's Disadvantage, have found this the secureſt, and possibly the only Means to finish his Destruction. For Vertue has ever, and that amongst the *Many*, something Aweful and Commanding; but let this his Bulwark be taken away, and he who just now under the Protection of Innocence and a good Conscience, said *I shall never be moved*, shall quickly fall a Victim to popular Fury, a deplorable, but real Instance how fatally the Wounds of the Tongue lead to those of the Sword, and that the first and sureſt Means to dispatch a Man effectually, is to sacrifice his Vertue and his good Name. And having trac'd this Evil through some of its malignant Influences upon private Persons (for *the Tree may be known* by a small Portion of *its Fruits*) 'twill be more easie to proceed in our Pſ. 64. 3.

Second Particular, and consider the unjustifiable Practice of *Evil-speaking of Dignities*, and those usual Freedoms which some are pleased to allow themselves in traducing the Publick Administration.

Now

Now beſides the Misfortunes already mentioned, in which Perſons of Figure and Imployment muſt be ſuppoſed to ſhare alike with other Men, it is to be obſerved to their farther Diſadvantage, that their Characters are not ſubject to common View, and ſo neceſſarily depend as to the Main upon the Credit and Report of others. And becauſe the Eminence of their Station, and the juſt Rewards of a faithful Service, have always ſomething to provoke the Envy of ſuch as could be well content to ſhine in thoſe Spheres themſelves; hence it comes to paſs that there are never wanting a Set of Male-Contents, who from their dark Coverts by peſtilent and ſeditious Libels, or where all Reſtraints of Shame and Fear are ſtifled, by more open and daring Invectives, are endeavouring to arm the Minds of the Populace againſt ſuch as are ſeated in the higher Places of Truſt and Dignity. For, as has been obſerved, 'tis the Misfortune of the Common People to be directed more by Appearances than Reality; ſo that whenſoever theſe are to be led into any factious Combination againſt the Government, we are ſure to hear ſuch as are employed in its Services, traduc'd by the moſt Scandalous, and as far as Envy and Prejudice may ſmooth the Way, at the ſame Time, moſt plauſible Inſinuations. For this is a Bait which theſe Maſters in Iniquity are ſure muſt take with their Under-Labourers, and the Conſequence they are too well aſſured will be, that their Heads being once inflamed, their Hearts will be ſeldom Cool, and their Hands ever ready to join in the fouleſt and moſt deteſtable Enterprizes: For the Tranſition is Eaſie and Natural from thinking ill of a Man, to act any Thing ſo againſt him, and when we have conceived a Prejudice againſt any One, or his Doctrine, we are ſeldom wanting to

proſecute

prosecute the Person or the Opinion to the utmost Disadvantage. I will not be tedious in this Observation; 'tis a Truth that Shines by its own Light, and a great variety of Instances that might be offered: But how common soever the Practice we have been declaiming against may be, and tho' it may meet with Favour and Approbation amongst the *Factions* and *Discontented*, it has abundance to answer for, and that upon some following Considerations.

1st. Because there is something sacred in the Persons and Characters of those who are deputed to sit at the Helm, and under the Sovereign to share both the Honour and the Burthen in transacting the Publick Affairs: So that the *Image and Superscription of Cæsar* has Authority sufficient to command Reverence and Esteem, and as in one instance, to deface the Royal Stamp is justly adjudged Treason; so in this to defile it, must be accounted amongst the highest Misdemeanours.

But then Secondly, it may with Security be urged, that the generality of the People are not to be supposed proper Judges of their Actions. For the Methods by which they proceed, like the Secrets of that God, in whose Stead, and by whose Commission, the Governors of the World are truly said to act, are by us *Unsearchable and past finding out*. And tho' it is confess'd we have not the same Authority to warrant an implicit Confidence in the one, as we have in the other, since Infallibility is not the Portion of Mortal Men, yet surely we must in all Duty and Gratitude own it an unworthy Return to their generous Pains for our Good, if not a presumptuous Intrusion into Matters too distant for our special Enquiry, that their Actions should be summoned to Justice by every Male-Content, much

much more that they should be subject to the publick Censures of every petulant and insulting Tongue. And therefore to hear a sage Assembly of *Mechanicks* canvassing the Affairs of State, and with *Front* and *Freedom* passing Sentence upon their Superiors, may have something to move our Mirth, but much more in reality to raise our Indignation. When Pride and Passion are pleased to erect a Tribunal, no doubt we shall meet with notable Decisions! But whether such Vile, such dangerous Enormities shall pass any longer, not only with Impunity, but Countenance, is humbly submitted to those Powers they Despise and Affront.

Then Thirdly, another Reason that may influence us in this Particular, is Decency and good Manners; and together with this, a Regard to the Honour and Weal of the Publick. Distance and Authority have abundance that may challenge both Fear and Reverence; but when we approach with any unseemly and unforbidden Freedoms by the highest Violation of all the Rules of Ceremony and Respect, we invert and destroy the natural and necessary Distinction of Things. And the apparent Consequences of this must needs be to bring the Government it self under Contempt, by weakening the Hands of those who are appointed to direct its weighty and important Counsels. For Reputation (no doubt) is the firmest Foundation of the Magistrate's Authority, and the Reverence of his Person is the surest Means to spread the Awe and Influence of his Power. When *Faithfulness and Truth are his Shield and Buckler*, then is he qualified for great and eminent Services, and by such Motives as are engaging and irresistable, to win, and even compel Men to Duty and Obedience. Now when those who are possessed of publick Charges

and

and Employs, come once to be despoiled of this sacred Prerogative, the Power of doing Good is to them in a manner wholly lost: The Awe of Authority will in proportion decrease, and the Government must lose the Force of that Majesty, which is necessary both for its Honour and its Support.

Add to this in the Fourth Place, that the difficulty of the Trust reposed in them, may plead in Extenuation of some smaller Failings and Infirmities, that Gratitude and good Nature should dispose us to Pity, and pass by some few Miscarriages where the Sphere of Action is wide and extensive, and where it requires perhaps more than human Strength and Prudence to walk with an unerring Care and Circumspection: And that Duty and Decency should rather incline us to cast a *Veil over the Nakedness* of the Fathers of our Country, than to expose them (the Curse if we do, will surely light upon us) to publick Scorn and Contempt.

It were indeed to be wished that we could not yet farther aggravate, and to the Charge of the Vice under present Consideration, add in the Fifth Place, that this is *ultimately* to strike at the Sovereign Authority it self. I say *Ultimately*, for there, no doubt, the Evil must in the Issue terminate, where 'tis more than bare Suspicion, it was at first intended. For besides that, a sawcy disputing the Prince's Choice of such as she is pleased to Authorize in the Execution of her publick Commands, looks as if we had too much a Mind to be directing our selves, and in no wise discovers any great good Affection either to the Royal Judgment or Person; that this is not Matter of Speculation and Amusement only, we may appeal to the whole *Series* of that long and unnatural Rebellion: A

Villainy that can never meet with an unſeaſonable Curſe and Abhorrence, becauſe it has even at this Day this higheſt Aggravation, that there are *who* dare to approve and juſtifie it.

As we paſs through the ſeveral Stages that lead to that execrable Parricide, we muſt obſerve, that a licentious Practice of inveighing againſt the *publick Officers* of State, and the many virulent, ſeditious *Libels* that were daily ſent abroad in contempt of the Government, gave Birth to moſt of thoſe fatal Calamities, in which both Prince and People became involved. Theſe, to ſpeak with a noble Hiſtorian, *were thoſe Seeds and Plants*, which in a Soil well-diſpoſed for all evil Impreſſions, *grew up and proſpered to a full Harveſt of Rebellion and Treaſon.* Lord *Clarendon.*

For all theſe Reaſons, and more and weightier, your own Reflections muſt ſuggeſt, we humbly hope the Cenſures of Authority will in due Time interpoſe, that a ſeaſonable Check may be put to theſe flagitious Attempts, and that thoſe who have hitherto proceeded in an incorrigible, I had almoſt ſaid, Triumphant Malignity, may be taught *at leaſt not to Blaſpheme.*

For as nothing ſeems to caſt a greater Blemiſh upon the Policy of any Government, than tamely to ſuffer it ſelf to be inſulted by every vile Incendiary; ſo the unreſtrained Liberty of the *Preſs*, amongſt other heavy Grievances, we have known, we have ſmarted under, has ever had, and notwithſtanding the popular Pretences of Ill-deſigning Men, muſt ever continue to have, the moſt malign Influence both upon our Civil and Religious Conſtitution. We preſume therefore to aſſure our ſelves amongſt the manifold Bleſſings of our preſent

Happy

Happy Administration, that this *Pestilence which in Darkness and at Noon Day*, has scattered Poison and Infection amongst our People, shall henceforth disperse and be no more: That the Men who have said *with our Tongues will we prevail*, shall no longer meet with Countenance and Approbation; but that a *Sentence of Silence* may in all Reason pass upon such bold and insolent Offenders.

And this we pray, not only in justice to those able *Patriots*, who execute the chief Offices of Trust and Power amongst us, with an irreproachable and almost astonishing Sufficiency, but also to the whole venerable Body of our present Ligislature. For as by a Power given us, we declare, That *to speak evil of the Rulers of the People*, whether Supreme or Deputed, is Base and Unwarrantable; So by the same Commission are we Authorized and Enjoined, to give *Honour to whom Honour is due.* Which Precept of Religion is found express and positive amongst the Capital Instructions of sober and undepraved Reason. To this Purpose *Aristotle* delivers, that there is a common Debt due to those who discharge the high and difficult Functions of a State with Wisdom and Integrity. Now the common Tribute, and which *only* all Men are capable of paying, is an honourable Regard and Reverence to their Persons, and consequently to defraud them of any part of this legal Claim and Prerogative, is grosly to offend against both Civility and Justice. τὸ κοινὸν γὰρ δίδου τῷ τὸ κοινὸν εὐεργετοῦντι ἢ τιμὴ ἢ τὸ κοινόν. In Obedience therefore to the Rule before us, to the lasting Praise of those illustrious Worthies who adorn our Court and Senate, it must be remembred, that in Duty to that Church, of which with them 'tis Wise and Reputable, to appear Sons and Disciples, they have given her a sure Pledge of

Aris. ad Nicomac. lib. 8. c. 14.

an inviolable Affection and Fidelity, by endeavouring in ſome Meaſure to repair her Breaches, and to enlarge the Bounds of her Communion, where *Her Enemies had laid her low even with the Ground*; by allowing at leaſt that reaſonable Toleration to a Sound and Apoſtolical Society, which an impudent and unruly Schiſm dares to challenge amongſt our ſelves by the high, but falſe Stile of a Legal Eſtabliſhment. And from theſe auſpicious Beginnings may we promiſe our ſelves, that God in his own good Time, in ſpight of thoſe who *who have evil Will at* Sion, will reſtore his Exiled Church in great Purity and Peace, that he will *Viſit his Vine, and the Vine-yard which his own right Hand had planted, and the Branch which he once made ſtrong for himſelf.*

From Perſons thus eminently diſpoſed to contrive, and zealous to execute whatſoever may promote the Church's Safety, we ſeem to have a fair Proſpect of reaping this deſirable Advantage, that they will Reform or Chaſtiſe thoſe Schools of Faction, where Schiſm and Prejudice are inſtilled as firſt and governing Principles into the Minds of Youth; where they are taught betimes to hate Monarchy and Epiſcopacy, and to devote an early Malice againſt both, to the great Diſhonour and Danger of our moſt excellent Eſtabliſhment.

If we conſider the ſame Perſons meerly in their Political Capacity, we have in every reſpect *whereof to glory.* For to their everlaſting Honour (to whom we wiſh all Happineſs and Proſperity *in the Name of the Lord*) not fearing the Cenſure of an over-officious and deſigning Flattery, without any partial Regard or Inclination, it muſt be urged, that when our Conſtitution ſuffered very

ſtrong

ſtrong Convulſions, and yet we had almoſt periſhed amidſt the Charms of a boaſted Security, they were the Inſtruments God was pleaſed to raiſe up for our Safety and Preſervation: Who by a ſeaſonable Correction or Exciſion of the corrupt and diſtempered Parts of our Community, may under the ſame indulgent Providence prevent a Relapſe into our former dangerous State, and by the Power of proper and wholſome Applications, may in Time recover the other languiſhing Members to perfect Health and Vigour.

If there were any in a late Adminiſtration, who in the Execution of their reſpective Truſts, were influenced more by a generous Concern for the good of their Country, than any private Intereſt or partial Views; if they have been *Provident* and *Frugal* in diſpenſing the Publick Treaſures, *Wiſe* and *Honeſt* in our ſeveral Alliances; then if we offend againſt the Rule advanced, and detain back any Part of honourable Tribute which is due to Perſons thus diſtinguiſhed, *May our Enemy perſecute and take us!* In the mean Time we muſt pray to be excuſed, if we think the Complement of our entire Selves and Fortunes, is too much to be paid to the Avarice or Ambition of a few particular Perſons; nor can we in any wiſe conceive we are wanting in Gratitude to the Services of thoſe who have merited Laurels in the Day of Battle, whilſt we ask for Peace which would render them no longer neceſſary.

Whether the fullneſs of God's Time be come to *Crown us with the Bleſſings of Peace*, is in his Power only to determine in whoſe Hands only 'tis to give it; or whether he will not continue to puniſh the Provocations of a ſinful Nation by the Fury of the Sword, one of his *ſore Judgments*, which he uſually

usually sends out against a Stubborn and Rebellious People, we have perhaps but too much Reason to fear. However this must not be urged in the mean Time to the Disadvantage of such subordinate Instruments, as God thinks fit to make use of in the general Dispensations of his Providence amongst Mankind. For after the utmost Efforts of human Policy to settle us in Peace and Tranquility, the Issue is still in the Hands of God, and to him therefore must in all Humility be submitted. But then to those who at present Rule and Guide us, it must be ascribed, under the Conduct of an All-wise and Omnipotent Providence, that we have any distant Views of so invaluable a Benefit. And if by a general Repentance and Reformation, we might hope we were worthy of a Good so seasonable and Extensive; this we might be sure to obtain from him who would *speak Peace to his People*, notwithstanding *the Adversaries Roar in the midst of our Congregations, tho' they have set up their Banners for Tokens.* Then as the same inspired Psalmist (whoever was the Author, or upon whatsoever Occasion that 85th *Psalm* was Penned) in a prophetick Triumph and Exultation delivers, *May Glory again dwell in our Land; when Mercy and Truth are met together; when Righteousness and Peace shall kiss each other.* Ezek. 14. 15.

FINIS.